LANDSEER'S WORKS

vol. 4 of 4

A.S.C.

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SIR EDWIN LANDSEER, R.A. PINXT

CHAS G. LEWIS. SCULPT

SLEEPING BLOODHOUND.

LONDON, VIRTUE & Co LIMITED

SLEEPING BLOODHOUND.

THE "Sleeping Bloodhound," painted in 1835, was first engraved two years afterwards by Thomas Landseer, Sir Edwin's brother. It was exhibited at the British Institution in 1835, and formed part of the late Mr. Jacob Bell's bequest to the nation, so that it is now to be found in the National Gallery. A second engraving, by Mr. J. C. Webb, is often seen; and the present is a very fair example of Mr. Lewis's skill.

The story of this picture is told in different ways. It appears that "Countess," who lies before us, sleeping on the top of a balustrade at Wandsworth, overbalanced herself and fell from a height of twenty-three feet, the fall causing her death the same evening. In the hope of securing some reminiscence of an old favourite, her body was taken to the artist's studio. He fully sympathized with the wish of the dog's master, and the present picture was finished in the extremely short space of three days.

THE FRIENDS.

"THE Friends" can require no explanation. The astonished face of the child plainly shows that the occasion for rescuing the boat has not arisen before: for the moment child reason and dog reason are face to face.

This picture was painted in 1837, and exhibited at the Royal Academy in the same year.

THE CHIEFTAIN'S FRIENDS.

WE think this a tastefully arranged group. The "Chieftain" is Lord Richard Cavendish, brother of the late Duke of Devonshire, for whom the picture was painted; and his "friends" are of course the falcon and the two dogs. Both the dead bird and its destroyer are extremely well painted, nor do we think any critic will find fault with the dogs.

We are told by travellers that the hawk helps the Persian greyhound successfully to chase the swifter antelope: by fixing its talons firmly in the head of the pursued animal, the bird so diminishes its speed as to enable the dog in time to come up with it. Here, on the contrary, there seems to be not a little rivalry between the two—either in their master's affections or in importance as procurers of sport.

"The Chieftain's Friends" was painted in 1828, and the only engraving of the picture is this by J. C. Armytage, made in 1862. The original is in the gallery of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth.

POINTER AND SETTER.

FIFTY years ago the thick-set, heavy Spanish pointer was in use throughout England, and if quite tired out by a morning's work, he was yet always sure and trustworthy. Note the thick ears and fore-paws of the dog before us. If by crossing with the foxhound we have produced an animal that can work all day, and be nearly as fresh on the morrow, by diminishing the pointer's hereditary tendencies we have increased the difficulties of "breaking" in a corresponding degree. Much the same difficulty has arisen, though to a less extent, in the case of the setter, which is, of course, nothing but a large spaniel improved for such work by being crossed with the same old breed of pointers. How greatly would the sportsman's pleasure be increased, could he always get such a peep as this at his dogs and the game they are pointing!

This sketch was engraved by Thomas Landseer for "Annals of Sporting."

WAITING.

MR. GRAVES says that these figures are "portraits of Buscar, a Highland deerhound of the original breed that belonged to Mr. MacNeill, a fox-hound, bloodhound, and greyhound, from crosses of which the modern deerhound is obtained, and a terrier." If we may judge by Landseer's measure of success in the matter, it is scarcely possible to paint a really taking picture of a group of dogs without any surroundings: their humanity, if we may so say, is great, but falls short of this climax. We would suggest a comparison with "The Three Dogs," to which sketch the present picture is perhaps rather inferior.

"Waiting" has been exhibited twice—viz. at the British Institution in 1839 as "Dogs," and at the Marylebone Institute in 1859: it was bequeathed to the nation by Jacob Bell, Esq., in 1859. Thomas Landseer engraved it in 1839, under the name of "Highland Dogs," as the frontispiece of Scrope's "Last Days of Deerstalking."

VAN AMBURGH AND THE LIONS.

THE original of this picture is in the gallery of his Grace the Duke of Wellington, K.G., &c., to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for permission to engrave it. Painted for the late Duke, it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1847, and shows the "lion tamer" as he used to appear with his animals at the London theatres, when the creatures were confined within the limits of a strongly barred cage of iron. Van Amburgh is habited in a costume after the fashion of an ancient Roman; he holds in his right hand a small whip, the only weapon he was accustomed to use on these occasions to defend himself against any attack the animals might be tempted to make upon him, though there was never much danger attending them, so thorough was the subjection to which he had reduced the naturally savage hearts, and that, too, without the exercise of cruelty. The lion, a noble animal, has raised himself against the bars of the cage, with his mouth partly open; behind him is the lioness, crouching down, with her eyes fixed upon her master with an intensity almost indescribable, yet with a mildness that is absolutely beautiful; so too is the face of the leopard beyond. The lioness, the texture of whose skin is a masterly piece of artistic handling, is, conjointly with the face of the leopard, the triumph of the picture, from the expression thrown into them. On the right of the "tamer" is a splendid tiger growling at its companions, and in the rear is a young leopardess. In front of the cage, on the floor of the stage, are several objects associated with theatrical success or amusements. Landseer never painted animal portraiture more naturally and beautifully than in this composition, while even the human figure harmonizes with the subject.

THE DOG AND THE SHADOW.

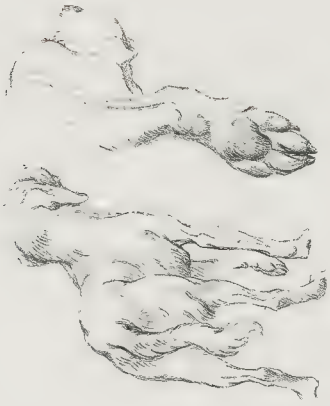
A PIECE with so much depending on the landscape is rare in Landseer's works, and no one who has followed with any care the changes increasing years wrought in his style will hesitate before assigning to this picture a comparatively early date; it was, in fact, painted in 1826. The care evidently bestowed on such an elaborate landscape was never so spent ten years later. A greedy cunning is well shown in the dog's eyes and attitude.

It has been remarked by one writer that "The Bull and the Frog" and "The Ass and the Thistle" (both unengraved works) are the only two other fables that Landseer has illustrated. In speaking of "Chevy Chace" we touched on the painter's difficulty in following out the ideas of others, as in an historical subject. But in the case of a fable, which, like a proverb, is "the wisdom of many and the wit of one," the same difficulty would not be anticipated. It is therefore hard to understand why other fables should not have been placed on canvas in the same way as this. The writer to whom we have just referred says that this is "a fact difficult to account for, except on the ground of the hackneyed character of such subjects as 'The Fox and the Grapes' and 'The Hare with many Friends.'" But we are unwilling to accept this explanation; for, on the one hand, it contradicts the well-known simplicity of the artist's character, and, on the other, "The Dog and the Shadow" can scarcely be considered a less hackneyed fable than the two above instanced. We prefer simply to think either that the idea did not enter Landseer's brain, or else that it was dismissed for want of time.

This picture, exhibited at the British Institution in 1826, was presented to the nation by Mr. Sheepshanks in 1857: it has not been otherwise engraved.

A SETTER DOG.

MENTION will be found of this sketch in Mr. Graves's catalogue under the name "A Spaniel lying down;" we have, however, preferred to give it a different title here. The original sketch was executed in 1819, when the artist was only seventeen years old, and is now in the possession of Henry Squire, Esq. There can be little doubt that Landseer met the dog somewhere about Hampstead, and took a fancy to draw it. And no wonder, for it is a handsome animal—intellectual-looking, we may almost say. It is well known that the feet of the setter are harder and tougher than those of the pointer, though we cannot suppose that there is any intention to point this out in the position of the dog before us: it must have been the dog's instinct, evidenced by the clear eye and clever head, rather than its capabilities of body, that occupied Landseer's thoughts while this sketch was being done. The engraving was done by C. G. Lewis in 1841.



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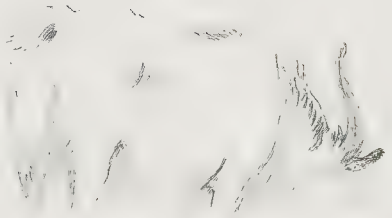


PLATE X

in a quiet way, than his "Highland Breakfast"—where the common needs of man and brute are shown in the mother suckling her little one, and the puppy, whose mother is drinking with other dogs out of a large pan of milk, is getting its natural breakfast at the same time. In "Highland Music" we have a contrast or strife of sound between dogs and man—the former with their natural voices, the latter with his bagpipes, trying which can make the most noise. Like Hogarth's "Distressed Musician," it almost makes one deaf to look at it. What man of us, or indeed woman, has not sympathized with the scapegrace terrier in "Be it ever so humble there's no place like home," who has been "out on the loose," and come back to his kennel to find his supper stolen? He seems to feel the weight of his iniquity and the comfort of a tub where he can lay down his tired head in peace. Though the home is humble

Fig. 98.—The Fisherman's Dog: Hastings (1840).

it is safe, and, if he had only stayed there, he would have had some supper, however poor. How much to be envied is the snail, who never knows the temptation of "straying," but carries her kennel on the top of her back! In "Dignity and Impudence" the smile is equally ready at a contrast of character so truly human; and in "Laying down the Law" the natural solemnity of the poodle and the accidental resemblance of his ears to a wig, heightened by the close-shaving of the rest of his body except the tufts by his forefeet, which look like ruffled shirt-cuffs, only need the book and spectacles to produce a parody of "the Bench," not so realistic and savage as Hogarth's, but sufficiently striking to amuse us. We might multiply the instances, if it were necessary; but the power of Landseer as a kindly humorist (what we might call a "good-humorist") and as a painter of dogs in all aspects

is so well and widely known that further remark would be superfluous. Landseer has been called the "Shakespeare" of dogs, and it is seldom that so bold a comparison is so well justified; and, considering how often of late we have seen comparisons made between the great poet and modern writers, we may add, that it is seldom the name of Shakespeare is so little taken in vain.

FIG. 99.—EOS, CAIRNACH, AND A DANDIE DINMONT (1841).

FIG. 100.—NEAR THE FINISH (1820).

CHAPTER VII.

DEER.

IF the dog had the greater share of Landseer's affection, to the deer it remained to affect most deeply his imagination. With the dog were associated all that is most pleasant, most sociable, most affecting to the individual. In his business or his leisure, his moods of mirth and sadness, from his boyhood to his end, the dog was his friend, his companion, his helper, his critic, his jester, his sympathizer, and his mourner. In the field, in the glen, on the mountain or the moor, at the seaside, on his travels, by his bedside, in his dreams of the olden time, wherever or at whatever time men lived and loved and died, the dog had his place as a necessary complement to humanity. But in his thoughts of time and eternity, in the metaphysical puzzles of this world, in the philosophical view of the conditions of this life, the struggle for existence, the meting of pain and pleasure, the inscrutable decrees of Providence, the hopes and fears and theories of existence, the dog gave place to the deer and the eagle, and the wild scenery of their home.

We are compelled to add the scenery, because the deer by itself, in a menagerie or a park, would have had no spiritual influence on Landseer's mind. It was the mystery

At Rest (1826 -7).

A Dead Hind (1827).

Plate XXXVI.

of the mountains and the clouds and mists of Scotland, the awfulness of their solitude, the terror of their sudden and magnificent displays of Nature's power, their incomprehensibility, their defiance of the power of man, their sacred splendour of light and shade and colour, that made the deer and the eagle, to whom this almost supernatural world was a home and a condition of existence, the animals which of all others were the most suggestive of thought as to the relations between the Maker and the made, and that boundless history of man, in which the history of the individual is but an atom.

But this was not always so. These far-reaching thoughts were the result of the

FIG. 101.—MOUNTING GUARD (1828).*

broodings of years, in which he paid his visits to Scotland as a sportsman and an artist. Of all sports, deerstalking was that of which he was most fond. It was a battle, he used to say, between the intelligence of man and brute. How much he loved it, both as an artist and sportsman, is shown by his almost innumerable sketches of some

* A lithograph of this was published in "Harding's Use of the Black Lead Pencil." The drawing is in pen and ink.

scene or other connected with it, to say nothing of the magnificent series of pictures which, year after year, sometimes by twos and threes, used to gladden the eyes of the visitors to the Royal Academy. Of his two series of drawings mainly relating to the stag ("The Forest" and "Deerstalking"), one was entirely devoted to different scenes connected with the sport: "Watching the Body," "How to get the Deer Home," "The Poacher's Bothy," "The Last Scene," "The Combat," and "Waiting for the Deer." But his delight was greater as an artist than as a sportsman. Mr. Stephens

FIG. 102.—FALLOW DEER (1838).

says, "People naturally fancied Sir Edwin was a keen sportsman. Nevertheless, such was by no means the case. In truth, he often carried the gun as an introduction to the sketch-book." And he tells two stories in corroboration of his opinion, one of which shows only that Sir Edwin was not considered a good shot, but the other is to the point. "On another occasion the gillies were astonished, just as a magnificent shot came in the way, to have Sir Edwin's gun thrust into their hands, with 'Here, take —take this!' hastily ejaculated, while the sketch-book was pulled out for shot of a

different fashion." "The gillies," adds Mr. Stephens, "were often much disgusted by being led about the moors, walking, with more sketching than shooting."

He was, therefore, interested in deer both as an artist and a sportsman, but rather as an artist; and to these points of view must be added another, we think, as constant as either of the others—viz., as a man. He always loved the dog, and he always pitied the deer. It was, as we have formerly observed, the only animal, the object of sport, in whose fate he sympathized. Rats might be killed, and a good riddance to them; partridges and pheasants were shot, and there was an end to them; cats and rabbits and hares might suggest an exclamation of patronising sympathy; but there was no righteous delight about the fall of a deer, no patronage in the pity which it caused. As a sportsman it was the result of a match worthy of both, as an artist it

FIG. 103.—AT PLAY (1838).

was an incident of grandeur as well as beauty, as a man it was a sight of almost pure pain at the sad havoc of a noble creature—little less than a catastrophe.

Nevertheless, the artist was king of all, and compelled him to draw the match, the incident, and the catastrophe, with the same faultless truth. Of the catastrophe, there is scarcely any drawing of Landseer's of a dead deer in which the sentiment is not suggested, and we have called attention to this in our comments on what must have been almost his first drawings of the dead animal (Figs. 35 and 36). The artist also compelled him to draw things almost repugnant to the man, such as the "Grealoch," or the habit dogs have of licking the deer's wounds. We have also noticed the fact that he began to make studies of the deer before he visited their natural home, or engaged in the sports of stalking or driving, viz., in 1820, when he drew the originals of Figs. 21 and 32. One other study of this year we give as the

headpiece to this chapter. ("Near the Finish," Fig. 100), in which the dogs are more like deerhounds than in Fig. 32; but which shows, as do both the former drawings, that the deer had already excited his imagination, and that he already sympathized rather with the pursued than the pursuer. There is a helpless limp about the hindquarters in all three drawings which is pathetic. The dying stag and the dead hind in PLATE XXXVI. both convey similar sentiments, one of sorrow for the pain of the noble and innocent, and the other of pity for the beautiful dead. Both these and "Mounting Guard" (Fig. 101) are comparatively early drawings.

How far less interest the tame deer in a park had for Landseer than the wild animal of the forest, is plainly shown in "Fallow Deer" (Fig. 102), and the two slight

FIG. 104.—IN THE PARK (1842).

sketches "At Play" and "In the Park" (Figs. 103 and 104), in which the artist seems to have been as much "at play" as the deer, and to have tried to make his work as uninteresting to us as it was to him. There is not even the beauty of grouping so observable in his most ordinary sketches; and we may as well here dismiss with a word the unfinished drawing of a "Stag's Head" (Fig. 105) and the "Hinds' Heads" (Fig. 109), the latter of which, however, deserves to be placed in the same rank as the rams' heads and bison in PLATES XXVII. and XXVIII., for beauty and power of execution.

The deer was the only animal of which Landseer may be said to have made a special study in its wild state, and whose natural life he may be said to have watched

Deer (1850).

Stag and Hind (1850).

with never-wearying care and pleasure. The beauty of its form, the nobility and grace of its bearing, the cleverness of its instincts, and its courage in extremity, together with the sublimity of its home, gave it a fascination from which Landseer never escaped. The grand isolated being, with so much for man to love and admire, and yet so totally beyond the range of his influence, so gentle and so wild, and within the circle of whose existence man never comes but to destroy, has quite enough in itself to attract the artist or poet without any effort of the imagination or excitement of sport. Landseer may be said to have mastered other animals, but the deer mastered him. He raised dogs almost to the scale of humanity, but deer raised him to a level of higher being. His love for the deer may not have been so deep, but

FIG. 105.—STAG'S HEAD (1842).

it was more elevating, less self-regarding, and it ended at last in stimulating his imagination to produce pictures deeper in thought and more awful in sentiment than any attempted by an animal painter before.

But this was the result of a long study of the deer and of nature for their own sake—the true motive of the artist, and far higher than his pictures of deerstalking, although this sport gave rise to such beautiful works as "Crossing the Bridge" and "A Drive of Deer" (of the latter of which we give a woodcut on PLATE XXXVIII.) we rank those of which the motive is rather the natural habits and character of the deer than the "pleasures of the chase." Of this class of study we give so many examples in this chapter as will make reference needless to those larger works which are so well known by engravings, such as "None but the Brave deserve the Fair,"

The Alarm

A Drive of Deer: Glen Orchay.

Plate XXXVIII.

and "The Challenge," and "The Monarch of the Glen." The first of these is "Suspicion" (Fig. 106), in which a herd of deer are startled by some taint in the air or noise on the wind. This, with the two following figures (107 and 108)—"Missed" and "Doomed"—are taken from the artist's drawings from his own work of "The Forest"—a series of twenty drawings, for which it was originally intended that Lord Alexander Russell should write the letterpress.* On PLATE XXXVII. will be found two finished studies—the one of roe, and the other of red deer—specially interesting both for their beauty and finish, and also because they were executed by Sir Edwin and etched by Mr. Thomas Landseer for the Queen's letter and note-paper. On

FIG. 106.—SUSPICION (1852).

the next plate (XXXVIII.) is a woodcut from an oil-picture ("The Alarm"), also of great beauty; on the next (XXXIX.), a study of the heads of two stags fighting ("The Combat"), and another called "The Challenge"—the former of which was probably sketched for the author's series of "Deerstalking," and the latter as a study for the well-known picture of the same name, or for the "Stag bellowing"—a picture of 1845 not engraved.

The engravings to this chapter will do much towards showing the power of the artist as a draughtsman of deer. They show the wonderful force and beauty with

* Graves, p. 31.

which he drew the form; one feels impressed with it as with an actual presence, so consummately felt is each figure in all its qualities, whether of fullness of life, or strength of limb, or bulk or weight of body, or harmony of organization. Each figure needs little to make it a splendid study for the sculptor, like his own magnificent model of a "Stag at Bay," exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1866. They also show the accuracy and care with which he studied their various attitudes and habits. They reflect their sensitiveness and their grace, their timidity towards man, and their courage between themselves. They also show something of the loneliness

FIG. 107.—MISSED.

of their haunts, their care of their young, and even—in Fig. 109—the texture of their hair and the consistency of their noses and ears; but they give but a faint notion of the beauty and impressiveness of the landscapes with which they were surrounded in his pictures, or of the lofty sentiment with which the grandest of these were inspired. To do this we need the pictures themselves, or such true interpretation of them as the best engravings can give, which yet lose much from want of colour and from imperfect translation of his chiaroscuro. Landseer has, however, been singularly fortunate in his engravers, among whom we may specially mention Mr. Outrim, Mr. C. G. Lewis, and Mr. Samuel Cousins, R.A., whose plate of "The

Midsummer Night's Dream," with its wonderful white rabbit, is so well known. Chief, however, among his engravers must ever stand his brother, Thomas Landseer, not only on account of the quantity but the quality of his engraving. And of all his plates most wonderful to us seem those of "Night" and "Morning," for the perfect rendering not only of form but of sentiment. They are more like the best etchings than engravings, so sympathetically does his touch alter to express every difference of texture, even to the imitation of the artist's handling of the fur of the fox or the coats of the deer; but more marvellous still is the perfectness with which

FIG. 108.—DOOMED.

aërial effects are produced—the transparency of the clouds, the mystery of the mists. The tonality is so perfect that one scarcely misses the colour, which indeed may almost be said to be given.

Who amongst us has not felt the poetical magic of these later pictures of deer, in which the artist seems to contemplate their life with a sadness like that of Jacques, but without its humour? There was never any suggestion of mirth to Landseer in relation to the deer. In these pictures he seems to look upon them from the sad hill of philosophy, whence he sees their history and sufferings as a sorrowful example of the strange inconsistencies of the lot of all created beings. In the "Challenge,"

The Combat (1844)

A Challenge (1845).

Plate XXXIX.

and "Night" and "Morning," we have the three scenes of the tragedy of life: first, the desire of supremacy and possession that will brook no rival, the lustiness of strength, the fatal attraction of beauty; in the second, the terrible struggle for life, the strange ordinance that requires that the happiness of one cannot be consummated without the destruction of another; that two noble beings must set their hearts upon the same object, and that one must die that the other may be content; and thirdly, the end of all earthly hopes—the final tragedy in the death, not of one, but of both, and the unpitying regard of nature for the noblest of her handiwork, who leaves the lifeless forms to moulder on the moor and to be the portion of foxes.

FIG. 109.—HINDS' HEADS.

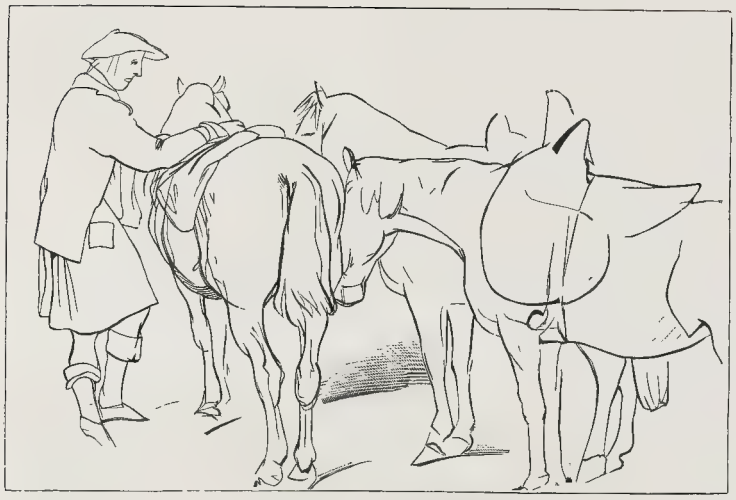


FIG. 110.—HIGHLANDER AND PONIES (1827).

CHAPTER VIII.

HORSES.

FROM the early sketches by Landseer in the fields near Hampstead of the various animals which he found pasturing there—the cows, the sheep, and the horses—one would have expected to find them playing more prominent parts in his compositions; but we find in after years the interest of man and dogs and deer swept them, not exactly off the stage, but into the obscurity of supernumeraries. That this should have been the case with other cattle we could more easily have understood; for, though they are of great value with regard to form and colour in a composition, their characters are so limited and their gift of expression so little in comparison with the dogs and the deer, that they could not but suffer in competition. It is, however, very different with the horse, whose beauty yields to that of no other animal, whose devotion to man is almost as great as the dog's, and whose variety of disposition and utility is as remarkable as the variations of its form; and yet, instead of finding it in a superior place in Landseer's art, we find it neglected more than any other animal. By neglect

we do not mean that he ever ceased to draw it, or to draw it well; but that it more rarely formed a centre of interest in his compositions, and that those compositions in which it formed the centre of interest were little more than portrait groups.

And yet what patience he took to master its form and habits is fully exemplified in the woodcuts in this volume. In the "Head of a Cart Horse" (Fig. 111) we have a most careful study of the way in which a horse approaches his food with his lips and nose, and in Fig. 112 we have a study of the whole animal, showing accurate observation of the way in which a horse stands with his head weighed down by a heavy nosebag, and with the sleepy look of contentment which characterizes it when engaged in chumping grain. In PLATE VI. ("On the Common") we find that in the

FIG. 111.—HEAD OF A CART HORSE (1815).

three years which have elapsed since Fig. 112, he has learnt to draw and foreshorten the animal with perfect skill. From that time forward he scarcely makes any further progress, or represents the animal in any other light than a simple figure remarkable for its beauty or its usefulness, but without any special character of its own that engages our attention strongly. It may surprise and delight us with the fullness of its beauty, the gloss of its coat, and its evident gentleness of disposition, as in the picture of "Shoeing the Bay Mare;" we may admire its exquisite grace of curve in the "Indian Tent, Mare and Foal;" but we feel that in both these cases the artist has been but feebly interested in the character of the animal, and cares far more about the beauty of its skin and its effect in the composition than its life and essential qualities as a horse. He painted "Taming the Shrew," or, rather, he called a picture

by this name; but the animal was tamed and the shrew extinguished before he painted her, and she was as tame as the rest of his horses.

In all his works Landseer preferred rest to action. Even his dogs—the most lively of his animals—he usually represented in repose, either standing, sitting, sleeping, or in attitudes of suspense. His deer were sometimes trotting—and how finely he could make them trot when he liked we may see in Fig. 107; they were galloping sometimes, as in the "Drive of Deer" (PLATE XXXVIII.); but in the majority of his

FIG. 112.—A CART HORSE (1815).

pictures they were motionless. Even in his pictures of fighting deer—as in the frightful struggle in "Night"—opposing forces have produced rest. But the most motionless of all his animals are his horses. They seldom even move their tails, and if they lift a hoof from the ground it is only to be "shoed." The only cases in which he has painted horses or ponies moving at more than a snail's pace are in his portrait of Lord Cosmo Russell and another of Lord Alexander (PLATE XL.), each on his pony, again in his picture of "Chevy Chase," where there is a real attempt at horselike spirit, and in one hunting sketch.

Yet his drawings of the horse are admirable, as far as they go. As a picture of beauty of horse-form we know nothing to equal his "bay mare." It is easy to criticize its shortcomings by enumerating qualities which it was never intended to possess; but at the end of all it remains impressed on the retina of the mind as a beautiful thing, which once seen can never be altogether lost from the memory. It is not only the glossiness of her coat or the exquisite beauty of her shape, but she has a nobility of bearing which raises her to the equine aristocracy, and makes us easily believe that to be tied up while she was being shoed, like an ordinary, underbred, uncultivated

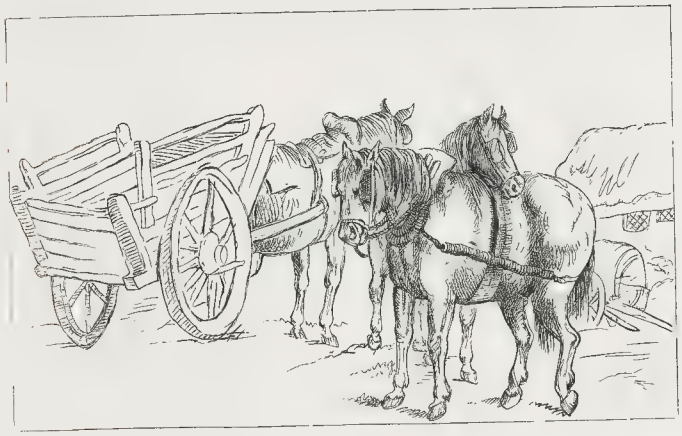
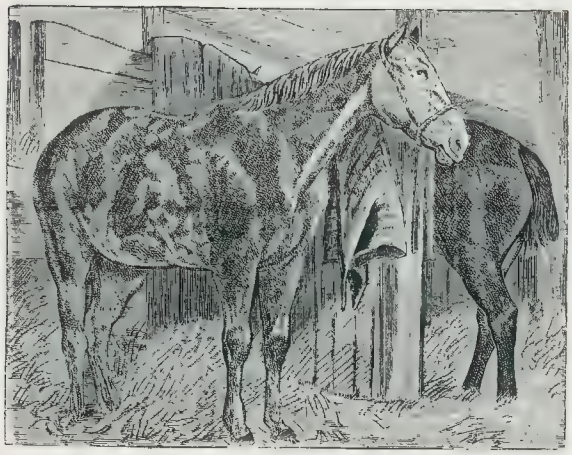


FIG. 113.—A FARM TEAM (1818).

mare, was an insult not to be borne.* His Highland ponies, as in Fig. 36, Fig. 43, and PLATE XXIX., are knowing and shrewd, and as well understood in form as

* Mr. Bell (to whom the bay mare, Betty, belonged) gives the following account of the picture in his Catalogue. "It has been reported that the mare would not stand to be shod unless in company with a donkey. The truth is, that the intimacy of the mare and the donkey commenced in the studio, and was cemented on the canvas. Another rumour states that the scene, as painted, occurred in the forge of a country blacksmith, where the mare was having a shoe fastened, and that the painter was so pleased with the composition that he made an elaborate sketch for the picture on the spot. Some critics have noticed the 'oversight' of the mare having no bridle or halter. This was not an oversight, as she would stand to be shod or cleaned without being fastened, but had a great objection to be tied up in a forge or against a post or door. When this has been attempted she often started back with a sudden jerk and broke the bridle. Other critics have remarked that from the mode of painting the toe of the off fore-foot, the mare appears as if her weight rested only on two legs. This was noticed before the picture was finished, and she was placed in position several times for the purpose of ensuring accuracy. In every instance she placed the foot exactly in the position represented."—Graves, p. 26.



In the Stable.

Lord Alexander Russell on Emerald (1829).

any of his animals, while in his studies during his tour abroad in 1840 he wrought the foreign animals with marvellous readiness and character. Indeed, we have never seen a drawing of a horse by Landseer without wishing to see another, or wondering why he allowed all the animation and action of the animal always to remain, as it were, in solution. The wonder and the regret increase when we turn to such a picture as "The Horse Fair," and see how grand a sight can be made of the ordinary but continual strife for mastery that is going on between the human and equine wills. Nor do they lessen when we see a picture so full of the force of animal life as "The Council of Horses," by James Ward, R.A., an artist who still stands

FIG. 114.—WAITING ON THE ROAD (1824).

unrivalled amongst British artists in the vigour and truth with which he represented the native spirit of the brute. Landseer's horses have no wills of their own: they are all well broken and subdued to the service of their masters. His feeling towards the horse seems to have been simply a delight in its beauty, and a pleasure in seeing it happily, if somewhat stupidly, at rest. Nearly all our figures of his horses are in the same position—standing at ease, with their bodies well thrown forward to take the weight off the hind legs, as is the manner of horses. We see this in the "Highlander and Ponies" (Fig. 110), "A Cart Horse" (Fig. 112), "Highlander and Horses" (Figs. 115 and 116), and "In the Stable" (PLATE XL.). We do not see it in Fig. 113,

because the horses are ill drawn (we fancy that the date ascribed to this sketch must be erroneous, as it is far behind other sketches of the same and earlier dates in knowledge and execution, if we judge by our woodcuts), and we do not see it in Fig. 114, because the man hides the shoulders. All the late sketches are remarkable for their ease and mastery, and Fig. 116 shows great feeling of the beauty of the heads and necks; but, as a whole, they are less interesting than any others of his sketches —more wanting in vigour and variety. There is a sense of sameness quite foreign to his other work, although the groups are very varied in composition.

One reason for this comparative neglect of one of the noblest and most beautiful of animals may be found in the preference shown by Landseer for the sports of Scotland to those of England. He did not hunt, and he did not race, and though he

FIG. 115.—HIGHLANDER AND HORSES (1827).

could ride he preferred to walk, as was natural to an artist; and another reason is that he could not do everything; and seeing how richly we have profited by his devotion to the dog and the deer we may well be thankful for what we have got, without complaining that he did not put forth his full strength in his pictures of horses. But we wish he had painted Rosinante.

But it was not the horse alone that was neglected. The pig—one of his earliest favourites—was condemned to complete oblivion, and his bulls, which he drew in his boyhood with such vigour, were relegated with cows to the minor *rôles*—mere pieces of utility, to be introduced now and again for effect of form or colour, but never with any proper recognition of their special qualities or brute feelings. While we, with regard to them, would use the same argument as with regard to horses, viz., that Landseer could not do everything, we yet may be allowed to regret that he painted no

picture which of its kind can compare with the "Fighting Bulls" of James Ward, or even the splendid group of bull, cow, and calf by the same artist in the National Gallery, and the more so as he showed in his youth the power to add this laurel to his fame, if he had so minded.

His laurels, however, are thick enough without this: he painted dogs and deer as no man ever painted them before; he inspired one with a humour and both with a poetry beyond all parallel in art; he added to this a feeling for the grandeur and

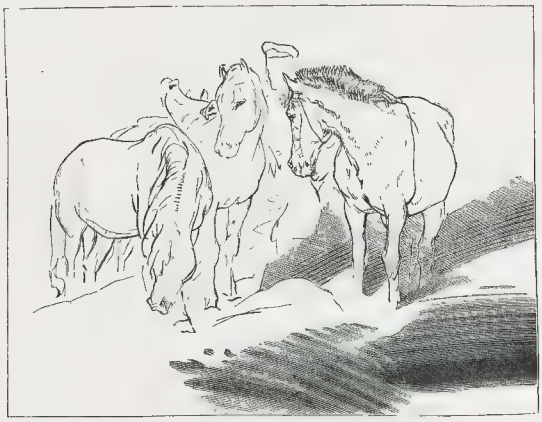


FIG. 116.—HIGHLANDER AND HORSES (1827).

sublimity of nature which gave to his pictures a charm and a sentiment which all can feel; he never painted anything false or ignoble, vulgar or unmanly; he won, as an artist purely, the affection and admiration of a whole people as scarcely any man, not a poet, or a soldier, or a statesman, or a philosopher, has ever won them before; and if against these achievements, to which many more may be added, we say that there were some animals which he chiefly regarded in their picturesque aspects, it is not much.

THE END.

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EXAMPLES OF LANDSEER'S EARLY WORK.

Example I.

WE now come to our examples of the artist's early work; and of these there will be found in these pages a sufficient number to give even the most casual reader some idea of the minute pains for which Landseer is famous. "A poet," it has been said, "is born a poet:" his genius may lead him to study the works of other great poets, and so he may broaden ideas, multiply conceptions, deepen sentiments, but the power of writing poetry is his independently of such application. With the great painter it is different. For him genius must be present; but genius without close study of the great collection of models—Nature—leads to but little. Genius prompts him to the toil, and reduces all difficulties within as small a compass as may be; but to suppose that the mere force of genius, unaided by close application, will enable him to transfer great ideas to the canvas, is to lose sight of one of the most important distinctions between poetry and painting.

The first two engravings on this sheet are from finished sketches; the third is a study. The sketches probably belong to 1825—7.

Example II.

Of all the sketches of which engravings are given in this volume, not one can be more interesting than the present. It is the first sketch (pen-and-ink) for "Laying down the Law," and is unusually obscure in several details: the reader, for instance, may require to be told that the object near the small dog's right forepaw is an inkstand, with a quill pen sticking up in it. The engraving is the work of Mr. C. G. Lewis, for whom this sketch was purchased at the sale of Count D'Orsay's and Lady Blessington's drawings. The dog here in the position of judge is Count D'Orsay's French poodle. It is a curious fact that the King Charles spaniel in "Laying down the Law" was introduced by Landseer at the request of the purchaser of the picture, the late Duke of Devonshire, whose dog it was—an addition by no means beneficial to the work. The first proofs of Thomas Landseer's etching of the picture are actually without this little dog.

The contrast between two dogs of opposite natures was a frequent means with Landseer of calling attention to curious traits in the bearing of one or both. Here the little dog only serves as a foil for its more important companion.

In Mr. Algernon Graves's catalogue of Landseer's engraved works this sketch is called "The Chancellor."

Example III.

We see by a note on this sketch that it was executed in 1820, the year in which was painted "Alpine Mastiffs reanimating a Distressed Traveller," well known to the public through Greatbach's large engraving. Up to this time, although he had exhibited pictures at the Royal Academy for five consecutive years, Landseer seems to have been content to represent commonplace subjects; but now we find

him beginning to study the more striking examples of a Creator's power. In this year he took advantage of the death of a lion at a menagerie in London to study its anatomy with great care, and the fruit of this study soon appeared in the shape of several pictures in which the king of the beasts took the principal place.

The formidable bull-dog here engraved has not been identified with any particular animal. The artist must have seen and drawn more than one of its race before producing this sketch. On careful examination of this sketch, or even of the engraving, it will be seen how deep a study such a piece of work required; every crease in the skin, every muscle—and there are many muscles—must be in its proper place, and the face must be what it is, a convincing proof of fortitude, obstinacy, and savage devotion.

Example IV.

This is the sketch for a picture of the same name which was exhibited at the British Institution in 1821. It is peculiarly suited to this place in our book. The specimens of early work hitherto placed before the reader have all been finished to a greater or less extent, but the present is one of the best examples that could possibly be found of the artist's wonderful power of conveying so careful a description by a very few touches. It is also important to notice how fully this power was developed for him early in life. The delicate tread of the pointer and the stiffened muscles are exactly shown, especially for the nearer dog; for it, too, the head is almost perfect. The birds cannot be far from the dogs' noses. The sportsmen are too far away from their dogs; yet, if they were brought closer, the prominence of the two dogs would be partly taken away, and the effect completely spoiled.

Example V.

Foot, eye, ear, and nose of a deer. These are studies from nature, and the opportunities of making them must have been found in some English park, not in Scotland. The engraving is the work of Thomas Landseer. We are not able to say for what picture these studies were made, nor, indeed, whether they have connection with any particular picture, but the reader should by all means refer to "In the Glen," a work bearing the date 1820: in that picture the noble stag in the foreground has parts almost exactly corresponding with the studies before us.

Next to the dog, the deer occupied more of the artist's time and care than any other animal. It is enough to remark on the improvement produced in his representations of deer by his early visits to the Highlands. True lover of animals and honest worker as he was, even Edwin Landseer cannot be said instinctively to have caught at once all the grace and beauty of those stately forms.

Example VI.

This is some of the artist's very early work, and probably belongs to his thirteenth or fourteenth year. At this time he was beginning to supply sketches for the *Sporting Magazine*. Of the studies before us (i.) is the finished figure of the goat; (ii.) is the head, drawn with great care, particularly the eye and ears; (iii.) is the hind foot; and (iv.) represents the animal stooping to browse. More examples of such studies as these, some of them done when he was not more than five or six years old, may now be seen in the South Kensington Museum.

It must be remembered that Landseer was most fortunate in having a father and other relatives who could appreciate his genius, so that his fondness for Art

met with every encouragement from his earliest years. At any time of the day he might be found in the field with his sketch-book, accompanied by his father or a servant. He thus had abundant opportunities of drawing such animals as sheep, goats, or donkeys.

Example VII.

On this sheet and the next but one will be found nearly as many figures of birds as in all the rest of the artist's engraved works put together. We have before pointed out in how few of Landseer's pictures birds appear. It is possible this may be in a measure due to the difficulty of seeing and studying the feathered tribes in their natural freedom—a difficulty which must have been no imaginary one to an artist whose favourite outdoor studio is now occupied by the Finchley Road Station of the North London Railway; but much more probable that his true love for and sympathy with animals led him to fix on those nearest to man in the scale of intelligence, leading him unconsciously one more step towards the intimate knowledge of himself by his countrymen.

First we have three studies of herons and two of eagles. Then comes an old cart-horse, stepping slowly forward. The legs of this animal are rather unfinished, and are not quite so carefully drawn as the other parts. In the top right-hand corner is a hawk or kite holding a recently acquired prey. Below is a very human-faced owl, and then some more birds. The two bottom ones exactly resemble gulls as they may be seen on any English coast, at one time poising themselves in the air on the look-out for fish, at another making a sudden swoop down to the surface of the water.

Example VIII.

The subject of this engraving is more of an anatomical study than anything else. The horse has fallen over a precipice, and has been caught on a projecting ledge. Apparently the fall has not been from any great height; but the left shoulder and foreleg are broken and crushed, while the whole hind-quarter on that side is forced out of position and cannot be moved. The animal must have fallen on the foreleg in the first instance; its momentum has been sufficient to twist up the leg and bring the shoulder heavily on to the rock, and at the same time, the body turning about the foreleg as a point of support, the side has come heavily against a small projection. The upturned eye, the fallen tongue, and, more ominous still, the vulture hovering above, show that the agonies of death are at hand.

This sketch does not lie open to the criticism of the general reader: no one can fail to admire the foreshortening of the twisted foreleg and other obviously good pieces of work, but to have actually seen a horse in such plight has fallen to the lot of but few. The piece must be accepted as a good example of the youthful artist's work, and nothing more.

Example IX.

At the top of this engraving we have wild ducks on the wing. First, the bird within easy shooting distance, say from fifteen to twenty yards off; next, the same bird as its outline begins to grow indistinct; and, finally, as it appears from a great distance, helping to form the figure in which these birds always fly. We may imagine that the birds are rising in a string. The sportsman is hardly so satisfactory; his head is not low enough for him to look along the barrel of his gun,

but, at the same time, the smoke at the muzzle shows he cannot have had time to raise his head; also he seems to want an ear.

The spaniel is a really good piece of work; all its dash and eagerness are excellently shown. In the right-hand bottom corner is another wild duck; it has been shot dead, and is just beginning to fall.

Landseer himself was seldom or never engaged in sport of this kind.

Example X.

This pleasing little sketch must have been amongst the earliest of Landseer's productions, and it does not appear to have been afterwards worked up into any picture. The monkey, as well as the dog, seems to have instinctively flown at its opponent's neck: his supple fore-paws must make his grasp no easy one to shake off, and, in spite of his chain, we will back him to make a good fight of it. It is difficult to resist the impression that the dog's hind leg is a little out of proportion.

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THE WORKS

OF

SIR EDWIN LANDSEER,

R.A.

ILLUSTRATED BY

FORTY-FOUR STEEL ENGRAVINGS

AND ABOUT TWO HUNDRED WOODCUTS

FROM SKETCHES IN THE COLLECTION OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

AND OTHER SOURCES

WITH A HISTORY OF HIS ART-LIFE

BY

W. COSMO MONKHOUSE

LONDON

VIRTUE AND COMPANY, LIMITED, 294, CITY ROAD.

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TEN EXAMPLES OF LANDSEER'S EARLY WORK.

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